

2008 NEX Institute – Thomas Jefferson: Personality, Character and Public Life
July 13 – August 8, 2008
Final Project
Sean Irwin (Boston College High School)

**The American Revolution's "North and South Poles":
The Evolution of the Adams-Jefferson Relationship**

Rationale: The purpose of this project is to explore the ever-changing nature of the relationship shared by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. In essence, the following lesson plans represent an effort for students to understand a.) how Jefferson and Adams first came to know and respect one another b.) the circumstances that led to their bitter falling out and c.) the ways in which the two men renewed their friendship during the final years of their lives. In order to achieve these goals, this curriculum unit relies exclusively on the exploration of events that were directly experienced by *both* Adams and Jefferson. Without question, the development of this unit was enhanced by the readings, discussions, and opportunities made possible by this NEX Institute.

Grade Level: This unit is intended for high school United States history students - ideally those in grades 10, 11, or 12. (Note: Although not required, this unit could reach its maximum potential if taught to students who have previously taken a US history survey course (i.e. students already familiar with the individuals and events to be discussed).)

Purpose: In addition to the rationale provided above, there exist several other reasons that make the study of the Adams-Jefferson relationship essential for our students. As students of United States history, in-depth analyses of the revolutionary era and the new republic are critical. Moreover, approaching such topics "through the eyes" of Adams and Jefferson provides students with first-hand accounts of some of the nation's defining moments. Finally, such a unit can effectively "humanize" two of our "Founding Fathers" by exposing students to both the achievements *and* struggles of Adams' and Jefferson's personal and public lives.

Learning Objectives: In completing this unit, students will . . .

1. analyze various primary and secondary source documents within their proper historical context.
2. compare and contrast the personal and political similarities and differences between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.
3. identify and understand the roles that Adams and Jefferson played in the pursuit of American independence (and in the years thereafter).
4. improve their writing skills and abilities.
5. consider the factors that affect the election of presidential candidates in the past and today. Further, they will assess how the growth of political parties (and thus the elections of 1796 and 1800) affected the Adams-Jefferson relationship.
6. investigate the renewed friendship between Adams and Jefferson from 1812-1826.

Resources: Please see individual lesson plans for the required materials.

Lesson 1 (1 class period)

Goal: To introduce the students to the Adams-Jefferson relationship and to help students to gain an understanding of the men's roles in the Second Continental Congress.

Homework to be completed in preparation for (i.e. prior to) this class meeting: John Adams by David McCullough (pp. 110-117)

Resources Needed:

John Adams by David McCullough (pp. 110-117)

Eyewitness to America by David Colbert ("Jefferson is Selected to Write the Declaration of Independence" by John Adams; pp. 79-80)

"John Adams" (XBO mini-series); Part 2: "Independence"

Class Activities:

1. Put the following quote on the board prior to the students' arrival to class. As soon as class begins, have the students read it to themselves and write a response to the accompanying question:

"I consider [John Adams] and [Thomas Jefferson] as the North and South Poles of the American Revolution. Some talked, some wrote, and some fought to promote and establish it but [Mr. Adams] and Mr. Jefferson *thought* for us all."

- Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence and friend to both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson

Opening Question: Given your knowledge of the American Revolution, what do you think Rush meant with this statement? Do you agree with Rush? Why or why not?

2. Conduct a brief discussion during which student volunteers offer their thoughts on the opening question. Then, as is the case with all new units, provide a quick overview of the key events that led up to the current area of study – in this case, explain British-colonial relations prior to July 1776.
3. After explaining the rationale of this new unit (and therefore the plan for the next several class meetings), ask the students to refer to the reading they completed for this class (i.e. the excerpt from John Adams). Ask the students what (if any) questions they had about McCullough's excerpt and clarify any confusion the students might have. Then, place a Venn diagram on the board with the word "Adams" above one circle and "Jefferson" above the other. (Note: If the students are unfamiliar with the workings of a Venn diagram, it must be explained to them). The purpose of this activity is twofold: a.) to assess/ensure the students' understanding of the assigned reading and b.) to show the students the similarities and differences (e.g. physical, upbringing/ background, political philosophy, etc.) between Adams and Jefferson. To complete this activity, one student will come up to the board and write an appropriate characteristic related to one of the men in the appropriate circle (or in the space shared by the two circles). Then, that student can give the chalk/marker to another student who will repeat this process until you are satisfied with the information presented. Following this activity, conduct a brief discussion that focuses on the men's similarities and differences

(e.g. "What about the two men makes it surprising that they could become close friends? Unsurprising?")

4. After explaining the Congress' decision to draft a Declaration of Independence (and thus a committee to complete such work), distribute the reading "Jefferson is Selected to Write the Declaration of Independence" by John Adams. The students should spend the next few minutes reading the selection, but they will work with a partner (pre-assigned) to answer the following questions:

- a.) Based on his description, how do we know that Adams was fond of Jefferson?
- b.) Why do you think that Jefferson suggested that Adams (and not Jefferson himself) write the Declaration of Independence?
- c.) Of the reasons offered by Adams for Jefferson's selection as the Declaration's primary author, which do you think was most significant in Adams' mind? Why?
- d.) Why, in the midst of war with the British, did Adams oppose Jefferson's description of King George III (in the Declaration) as a "tyrant?"
- e.) At the end of this selection, Adams refers to the original Declaration's "vehement philippic* against negro slavery." Why do you think the Congress refused to endorse a document that condemned the institution of slavery?

* an angry or bitter denunciation

While the students are working, move around the classroom to ensure that the students are on task and to guide any students in need of assistance. Again, have students volunteer their responses to the questions and lead a discussion centered on their findings.

5. If time allows, show the students the clip (length: 3:42 minutes) of Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin discussing Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence as shown in the HBO series "John Adams." (Note: If the DVDs are unavailable, this clip can be found at the following website: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1txi1687wo>). In watching this short clip, ask the students how the television series' presentation of this event is similar and/or different from the way Adams described it in the Eyewitness to America reading.
6. To conclude, explain to the students that the shared experience at Philadelphia in the summer of 1776 led to an extremely close friendship that would last through the remainder of the 1770's, throughout the 1780's as the two men served (and sometimes lived) together in Europe as American ministers, and during the first few years of the 1790's when they both served in President Washington's administration.

NOTE: For further student and teacher resources related to the creation (and adoption) of the Declaration of Independence – including lesson plans and primary source documents – see the Massachusetts Historical Society's website: <http://masshist.org/revolution/declarations.php>

Lesson 2 (1 class period)

Goal: To continue to explore the evolution of the Adams-Jefferson relationship while simultaneously analyzing the changing political climate in the new republic.

Homework to be completed in preparation for (i.e. prior to) this class meeting: Textbook reading covering post-revolutionary America (the "critical period" through the Washington presidency).

Resources Needed:

Blank white paper (8 ½" X 11")

Colored pencils

1796 Presidential election "ballots"

"Cliffhanger" (article) by John Ferling. Smithsonian Magazine (November 2004)

Class Activities:

1. Put the following question on the board prior to the students' arrival to class. As soon as class begins, have the students read it to themselves and write a response:

Opening Question: Upon which characteristics and/or skills do Americans place the most value when evaluating their presidential candidates? That is, what do Americans (yourself included) look for when trying to decide for whom to vote?

2. Conduct a brief discussion during which student volunteers offer their thoughts on the opening question. As the students offer their responses (i.e. specific characteristics they look for), you can list them on the board.
3. Briefly review the topics/events discussed in the last class meeting (e.g. the similarities/differences between Adams and Jefferson, Philadelphia 1776, etc.).
4. Since the focus of this class period will be the presidential election of 1796, it is important to ensure the students' knowledge of Adams' and Jefferson's lives from 1776-1796. Also, a few minutes should be allocated for a discussion of the formation of partisan alliances during Washington's first term. For the Adams-Jefferson discussion, two timelines should be put on the board (both ranging from 1776-1796) on the board. Then, lead the class in identifying some of the key events/roles the two men encountered during these years. Special attention to be given to the *shared* moments that occurred during this time (e.g. serving as ministers in Europe in the late 1780s, working in the Washington administration together). In addition to discussing the important service Adams and Jefferson performed for the country, the point of this timeline activity is to highlight the growing friendship that Adams and Jefferson cultivated after their initial meeting in 1776.
5. To transition to the election of 1796, have the students make a "T-chart" (i.e. two columns) in their notes. One column should be labeled "Adams" and the other "Jefferson." Drawing the students' attention to the presidential characteristics they described during the opening activity (these should still be written on the board), have the students list the characteristics, skills, and experiences that they believe made Adams and Jefferson qualified presidential candidates in 1796.
6. After taking responses from several student volunteers, distribute one sheet of blank white paper (8 ½" X 11") to each student. Then, ask the students to imagine that they are living in 1796 and that they have volunteered to work for either the Adams or Jefferson campaign. Consequently, they will be creating a campaign poster for either John Adams or Thomas Jefferson (for the 1796 election). It would be helpful if you have a current example of a campaign poster to ensure student understanding. In creating their poster, the students should stress the candidate's achievements and assets (as opposed to simply concentrating on the

ARTISTIC QUALITY OF THE ASSIGNMENT). AS THE STUDENTS COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT, WALK AROUND THE ROOM MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IF/WHEN NECESSARY.

7. TO CONCLUDE THIS LESSON, DISTRIBUTE ONE 1796 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION "BALLOT" (I.E. A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER WITH THE NAMES "ADAMS" AND "JEFFERSON" ON IT) TO EACH STUDENT. THEN, BASED ON EVERYTHING DISCUSSED DURING THIS CLASS, EACH STUDENT SHOULD (SECRETLY) CIRCLE THE NAME OF THE CANDIDATE THAT HE/SHE FEELS WAS BEST PREPARED TO SUCCEED GEORGE WASHINGTON AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THEN, COLLECT THE BALLOTS AND TELL THE STUDENTS THAT THE RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT THE START OF THE NEXT CLASS. THEN, DISTRIBUTE THE ARTICLE "CLIFFHANGER" TO BE COMPLETED FOR HOMEWORK FOR NEXT CLASS.

Lesson 3 (1 class period)

Goal: To understand why Adams' and Jefferson's relationship fell apart during the tumultuous years of the Adams administration.

Homework to be completed in preparation for (i.e. prior to) this class meeting: "Cliffhanger" (article) by John Ferling. Smithsonian Magazine (November 2004)

Resources Needed:

Quiz on "Cliffhanger" (article)

Jefferson's letter to Adams (December 28, 1796)

"Cliffhanger" (article) by John Ferling. Smithsonian Magazine (November 2004)

Founding Brothers by Joseph Ellis (pp. 206-211)

Class Activities:

1. Distribute/administer the quiz on the "Cliffhanger" article (see below for the quiz).
2. As the students are taking their quiz, put the following question on the board. Once the quiz has been completed, have the students read this question to themselves and write a response:

Opening Question: Given what we've learned so far about the personalities, characteristics, skills, and experiences of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (in the years leading up to 1796), how do you think these two men would fare as presidential candidates today? What might you and other Americans find appealing? What might concern you?

3. Conduct a brief discussion during which student volunteers offer their thoughts on the opening question. Also, take a few moments to review the issues discussed during the last class meeting (e.g. the growth of the Adams-Jefferson relationship from 1776-1796, the traits that qualified each man to contend for the presidency in 1796, etc.).
4. As promised at the end of the previous class meeting, reveal the results of the class "election" to see who the students thought most qualified to lead the nation in 1796: Adams or Jefferson. Then, ask a few student volunteers to explain why they cast their votes they way that they did.
5. Regardless of the results of the class election, discuss the actual events/results surrounding the election of 1796 (i.e. Adams received 71 electoral votes, Jefferson received 68). Be sure to remind the students that such a vote count resulted in Jefferson's election to the vice-presidency.
6. Distribute the letter that Jefferson wrote to Adams on December 28, 1796 (following the election). Working with a partner (pre-assigned), each student should read the letter and answer the following questions (to be written on the board):
 - a.) Keeping in mind the fact that he had just lost the election, do you think Jefferson's sentiments were sincere? Why or why not?
 - b.) Would a losing presidential candidate ever write a (private) letter like this today? Why or why not?
 - c.) Although Jefferson wanted to express his congratulations to Adams, he decided against actually sending this letter (as a result of advice he received from James Madison).

Why do you think Madison advised *against* sending the letter? More importantly, why do you think Jefferson ultimately agreed with Madison's advice?

- d.) In your opinion, would things between Adams and Jefferson have been different if Jefferson had sent this letter *or* had their relationship reached "the point of no return" (that is, was their relationship already doomed as of December 28, 1796)? What makes you say this?

Once the student-pairs complete their answers to these questions, guide a whole-class discussion of the questions. Important here is the need to communicate the fact that the 1796 election of Adams marked "the beginning of the end" of the Adams-Jefferson friendship (despite the fact that Jefferson would serve as Adams' vice-president).

7. Next, ask the students to take out the "Cliffhanger" article they read for today's class. With most of the time remaining in class, lead a discussion of the article whereby the students identify "evidence" that supports the notion that the years of the Adams presidency (1797-1801) ultimately ended (albeit temporarily) the men's friendship. Among other things, the "Quasi War" with France, the Alien & Sedition Acts, and the 1800 campaigns must be highlighted/explained/discussed. (Note: if samples of political cartoons from the 1800 campaign are available, these too could be most helpful). Although there are many ways to discuss the "Cliffhanger" article, it might be easiest to use the quiz questions as the foundation for the analysis. Finally, distribute the Founding Brothers reading to be completed for homework for next class.

Name _____

QUIZ - "CLIFFHANGER" (ARTICLE)

DIRECTIONS: Using a pen or pencil, please write the answers to the following questions in the spaces provided. Answers must be written in complete sentences and should offer evidence that the reading was understood (i.e. the more specifics the better). **NOTE:** Generally speaking, these questions are presented in the order that they appear in the reading.

1. Throughout this reading, there is a group of politicians referred to as the "Ultras." Who were they? What were their goals/achievements?

2. According to John Ferling (the article's author), in the election of 1800 John Adams "became the first presidential candidate to fall victim to [a] notorious clause in the Constitution." Which "notorious clause" cost Adams his potential victory and why was this the case?

3. As the days passed in February 1801, and as Congress struggled to determine who the next president would be, rumors spread throughout the nation. Many of these rumors described the potentially "drastic consequences" that would occur if Thomas Jefferson was denied the presidency. Please give one example of these rumors.

4. What is one reason why some historians believe that Jefferson "cut a deal" with the Federalists in order to assure himself the presidency?

EXTRA CREDIT (1 point): What was the first and last name of "Delaware's lone congressman, who held in his hands the sole determination of how his state would vote?" _____

Lesson 4 (1 class period)

Goal: To continue to assess the effect of the Adams presidency on the Adams- Jefferson relationship and to discuss why Adams failed to win re-election in 1800.

Homework to be completed in preparation for (i.e. prior to) this class meeting: Founding Brothers by Joseph Ellis (pp. 206-211)

Resources Needed:

Founding Brothers by Joseph Ellis (pp. 206-211)

"Thomas Jefferson" (film by Ken Burns); Volume II

Adams' letter to Jefferson (March 24, 1801)

Class Activities:

1. Ask the students if they have any questions about the Ellis reading due for this class.
2. Offer a synopsis of the issues discussed during the previous class meeting to ensure student understanding. In particular, you should remind the students of the previously established argument that it was the years (and events) of the Adams presidency that caused the falling out between the two men.
3. To continue this theme of the devastating effect of Adams' presidency, show a clip from Ken Burns' film "Thomas Jefferson." Specifically, there is a fifteen-minute clip that begins with the election of 1796 and ends with Jefferson's inaugural address in 1801 which could be very helpful in exhibiting the growing rift between Adams and Jefferson. While watching the film, the students should attempt to gather evidence (i.e. take notes) that supports this fact. Upon completion of the clip, ask students for the "evidence" they found by watching the film. **NOTE:** In addition to the many examples offered in the film, be sure to highlight the fact that Adams refused to greet Jefferson at the inauguration. Rather, Adams left Washington at dawn on March 4, 1801 and headed home to Quincy, Massachusetts.
4. Distribute copies of John Adams' letter to Thomas Jefferson from March 24, 1801. Although brief, this letter – or rather, Jefferson's unwillingness to respond to it – illustrates the state of the Adams-Jefferson relationship as of early 1801. (**NOTE:** It is important to note that Adams sent this letter to Jefferson in response to Jefferson sending a letter for Adams that had arrived in Washington. Keep in mind that much like today, we sometimes have letters sent to an old address shortly after we move to a new home. Therefore, the practical purpose of Adams' letter was to thank Jefferson for this favor. Another purpose for writing this letter, however, was for Adams to inform Jefferson that Adams' son, Charles, had died in late 1800. Finally, it should be pointed out to the students that this letter represents the last letter exchanged between Adams and Jefferson until 1812!). Once every student has a copy, read the letter aloud (or ask a student volunteer to do so). Then, lead a brief discussion of the letter and its significance. Possible discussion questions could include:
 - a.) What are "the basics" of this letter? That is, where were Adams and Jefferson living when this letter was sent? What was Adams telling Jefferson in this letter?
 - b.) Are you surprised that Adams would mention such sad personal news in a letter to Jefferson (given the state of their relationship at this point)?
 - c.) Why do you think Jefferson failed to respond to this letter? How was Jefferson's response here (or lack thereof) similar and/or different from his decision to *not* send

a congratulatory letter to Adams in December 1796 (as discussed in the previous class meeting)?

5. Next, ask the students to refer to the selection from Founding Brothers they read in preparation for this class meeting. Then, organize the students into four groups and instruct them to discuss the following questions in their small groups. Each group should be instructed to appoint a spokesman who will report back to the whole class.
- According to Joseph Ellis, Adams' "hate for Jefferson was far less, [but] the hurt was more." Why do you think this was the case?
 - Even though Adams had lost the presidency, Ellis tells us that Jefferson, too, felt victimized by the events of 1800-1801. What did Jefferson view as "personally unkind" and why do you think this left such an impression of him?
 - What most surprised you when reading about Abigail Adams' correspondence with Jefferson in 1804? What about this was surprising?
 - Ellis tells his readers that John and Abigail Adams were "charging Jefferson with two serious offenses." What were these two offenses and which of these do you think hurt the Adams' most? Why?
6. Conclude this lesson by having the groups report to the class as a whole (depending on the time remaining, consider having each of the four groups offer a response to only one of the questions). Then, clearly establish the fact that as of 1804 (if not sooner) the Adams-Jefferson friendship was no more. For homework, the students should write a brief response (1-2 paragraphs) to the following question:

Based on what you've studied thus far, who should receive the most blame for the eroding of the friendship: Adams or Jefferson? Why?

NOTE: For those who teach in or near Massachusetts, this would be an ideal point in the curriculum unit to conduct a field trip to John and Abigail Adams' home ("The Old House" or "Peacefield") in Quincy, Massachusetts. This house was home to the Adams' as of 1788 and proved to be a source of great joy for John Adams during his post-presidential years. Moreover, the staff at the National Park Service is extremely knowledgeable and does a tremendous job with school groups. In particular, the park rangers are well-qualified to speak to the Adams-Jefferson relationship.

Lesson 5 (1 class period)

Goal: To evaluate how it was that Adams and Jefferson renewed their correspondence (and thus their friendship) in 1812 and continued it until their deaths on July 4, 1826.

Homework to be completed in preparation for (i.e. prior to) this class meeting: A brief written response to the following question:

Based on what you've studied thus far, who should receive the most blame for the eroding of the friendship: Adams or Jefferson? Why?

Resources Needed:

Adams' letter to Jefferson (January 1, 1812)

Jefferson's letter to Adams (January 21, 1812)

"John Adams" (HBO mini-series); Part 7: "Peacefield"

Daniel Webster's eulogy of Adams and Jefferson (August 2, 1826)

Class Activities:

1. Begin this final class by first reviewing the key concepts of the previous class meeting (e.g. the events that led to the temporary end of the friendship). Then, have the students take 1-2 minutes to review the writing they completed for homework. After this, conduct a brief discussion of the students' opinions.
2. Guide a very brief and informal class discussion about why it can be hard to forgive others (especially when those we care for most are those who hurt us). Ask the students about their experiences with the expression "time heals all wounds" and if they have found it to be true. Connect this discussion to the eventual reconnection between Adams and Jefferson in 1812 (being sure to give credit to Dr. Benjamin Rush for the key role he played in orchestrating the reunion).
3. After explaining how Rush was able to convince Adams to "extend the olive branch," distribute Adams' letter to Jefferson from January 1, 1812. If your classroom's technology allows it, project an image of the actual document on the screen/board. (The following website offers such an image of this letter: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/s9.9.jpg>) Then, read the letter aloud to the class and clarify any confusion the students might have about its content.
4. Then, have the students take out a sheet of paper and write a short letter in response to Adams (as if they were Thomas Jefferson). Although not mandatory, it might be helpful to remind the students of some key events that occurred during the early 19th century (e.g. Jefferson's presidency until early 1809, Madison's succession to the presidency, the US on the brink of war with England, etc.). After this, if one or two students are willing, ask them to read their letters aloud to their classmates.
5. Distribute Jefferson's letter to Adams from January 21, 1812 in order to allow the students to see that *actual* response that Jefferson offered. If time allows, have students read through the entire letter and then discuss/clarify it with a partner. If time is limited, focus the students' attention on the second and third paragraphs that focus on the men's early life/relationship and on Jefferson's then current daily routine. Explain to the students that Jefferson was clearly excited to renew his friendship with Adams and that the two men would exchange 158 letters over the course of the next fourteen years. To bring this exchange "to

life." Show the students the clip (length: 4:26 minutes) from the HBO series "John Adams" of Adams and Jefferson writing and narrating some of the letters that they exchanged from 1818 onward (until Jefferson wrote Adams to congratulate him on the presidential election of John Quincy Adams in early 1825). (Note: If the DVDs are unavailable, this clip can be found at the following website: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKRZRWY7U4s>).

6. To close, remind the students that, incredibly, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826: the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Also remind/inform them of Adams' reported last words: "Thomas Jefferson survives." If time allows, share with the students Daniel Webster's eulogy of both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as delivered on August 2, 1826. In addition to being beautifully written, this eulogy provides an excellent way to conclude a unit on the Adams-Jefferson relationship as it describes the men's achievements both as individuals and as political partners and friends. (This speech can be found at the following website: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dwebster/speeches/adams-jefferson.html>)

Unit Assessment: In addition to the aforementioned quizzes, writing exercises, and the other class activities and homework assignments, the following essay questions can be used to assess the students' overall understanding of the content presented:

- To what extent was the characterization of Adams and Jefferson as the "North and South Poles" of the American Revolution appropriate?
- To what extent was the Adams-Jefferson relationship damaged by domestic affairs and to what extent was it damaged by foreign conflicts?
- FOR AP CLASSES: The debate over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 revealed bitter controversies on a number of issues. Discuss the issues involved and explain why these controversies developed. (1977 AP US History exam document-based question)